

STORY OF DISSECTION, THE—Jack Kevorkian, M.D., Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y., 1959. 80 pages, 16 illustrations, \$3.75.

This slender volume purports to tell the story from the earliest times to the present of the use of the human body for both anatomical and pathological studies. All this is compressed into ten brief chapters which follow a conventional chronological order, beginning with Antiquity, passing through Classical Greece, Hellenistic Alexandria, Rome and Byzantium to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Baroque Period, to terminate with the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. The purpose of the volume, according to the author in his introduction, is to reveal the fluctuation of attitudes towards dissection and to reveal how dissection "affected the subsequent growth of the healing art."

At its most elementary level historical writing must possess a creative element controlled by the iron discipline of the historical method. The present work fulfills neither of these fundamental requirements. In the first place it is based almost exclusively on secondary sources, many of which would appear to have been misinterpreted. In the second place it is full of erroneous statements and exhibits a lack of caution which betrays the tyro.

The first chapter opens with the astonishing observation: "Our insight into the works of the earliest times is totally dependent upon information transmitted in the medical writings of Homer and of the early Roman period, notably those of Cornelius Celsus and Claudius Galen. Original records, if they were left at all, have not survived the rigors of history." Dozens of records exist which antedate Homer and which originated in the interval between Homer and the early Roman period. What is to be said of such gaucheries which speak of "Mycenean and Minoan cultures of Homer's time," for the world which the Homeric poets pretend to describe is one which had disappeared hundreds of years before and the Dark Ages of the Dorian invasion had intervened. Then not only is the Egyptian chronology used somewhat antiquated but the author naively accepts the view that "several medical books were written by Menes, founder of the First Dynasty in 3400 B.C.," and further, dismisses all modern Egyptological scholarship by stating that "none of its [Ancient Egypt's] contributions to medicine was of permanent or influential nature," apparently unaware of the source of many of the Hippocratic aphorisms, of Cnidian medical thought, of Pythagorean opinions, of the Dioscoridean *materia medica*, and of numerous other Greek works, to say nothing of the word for word translations of Egyptian writings surviving to the Renaissance. In the difficult Greek period, the author becomes greatly entangled. Apart from the unintelligible statement that "A materialistic outlook dominated the thought of the early great philosopher-scientists such as Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) and Empedocles (504-443 B.C.) and undoubtedly conditioned exaggerated reverence for corpses of the earlier period," we are told that the "Dogmatists emphasized the doctrines of Hippocrates" on page 18, and on page 20 that "The Dogmatic School of Hellenism was an adherent of Aristotelian teachings and probably a direct consequence of it." Then Herophilos and Erasistratos are categorically accused of human vivisection although the practice was protested by "many of their illustrious contemporaries" and by "later historians such as Galen and Tertullian." This charge has been made against many other anatomists at varying times. In the case of the Alexandrians, Herophilos and Erasistratos, no contemporary evidence is known. The charge was made by Celsus and the imperious, intractable, anti-pagan Tertullian hundreds of years later. Although Galen was educated at Alexandria, and even wrote a diatribe against Erasistratos yet, contrary to the statement of the author, his works are

entirely silent on the subject of human vivisection. This very silence has made the charge highly suspect. However, what is one to think of an author who is not only in gross historical error, but justifies the practice of human vivisection with "It was the noteworthy consequence of earnest contemplation and sincere conviction, the very serious means to a very noble end." In the Roman Period Soranus is reported to have "occasionally dissected a woman's body," which is at variance with the grave doubts expressed by O. Temkin in his superb study of this writer. Likewise, without any documented evidence, the author credits Galen with having dissected "no more than two or three human bodies after having left Alexandria," despite the fact that no serious student of Galen has ever been able to prove unequivocally that Galen dissected even a single body. The further statement that Galen was "Cognizant of the anatomic differences between man and animals," apart from surface superficialities, cannot be supported, or is open to gravest doubts.

It is possible to go on documenting factual error after error which mar almost every page, but it is too discouraging, especially when we find Sylvius (Jacques du Bois) acting in the year of his birth, 1478, as the first prosecutor at the University of Paris, and that Fallopius and Eustachius "paved the way for the great work of Andreas Vesalius," although they worked and wrote many years after, not before, Vesalius. Enough has been said to point to the total unreliability of this book.

J. B. DE C. M. SAUNDERS, M.D.

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OLDER PATIENT, THE—By Twenty-One Authors—Edited by Wingate M. Johnson, M.D., Chief of Staff, Private Diagnostic Clinic, and Professor Emeritus of Clinical Medicine, Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest College. Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., Medical Division of Harper & Brothers, 49 East 33rd Street, New York 16, N. Y., 1960. 589 pages, \$14.50.

The geriatric patient requires of the doctor a special interest and orientation if he is to have the best attention. The doctor must not only know the subject but he must find a challenge in the care of the aged if he is to do good work.

Old people are likely to have a monotonous congeries of disabilities—cataract, lack of teeth, bronchitis, emphysema, cardiac weakness, hernia, prostatism, varicose veins, etc.—the importance of which must be sorted out and put in balance by the doctor. This book helps to do just that, and while there is necessarily an overlap between old age medicine and other medicine the emphasis here is plainly on geriatrics. The writers of the various chapters have kept this clearly in mind and the result is a fine treatise which no one interested in old patients can afford to be without.

ARTHUR L. BLOOMFIELD, M.D.

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WOMEN AND FATIGUE—A Woman Doctor's Answer—Dr. Marion Hilliard. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 575 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y., 1960. 175 pages, \$2.95.

This book is written in simple form and language for the lay public, particularly nervous, tired women.

It deals with some of the real and fancied problems of the adolescent, the married woman, the spinster and the menopausal soul. The explanations and Dr. Hilliard's advice are given in general terms, much of it inspirational. Acceptance of hereditary limitations, metabolic changes, and environmental stress, and adaptation to them, are presented as a practical solution to fatigue.

The book is rather superficial and perhaps more suitable for serialization in a women's home magazine or some Spanish count's column.

M. E. MOTTRAM, M.D.